

RUTH'S BEAUTY MASK

Ellis had to admit, it was quite an invention.

"It's a beauty mask," said Ruth, "It protects your hairdo and face while you get dressed."

"It looks like a plastic bag with a zipper on it," said Ellis, who never worried about his face or hairdo.

Ruth paid him no mind. She had a brand new Nancy Reagan bouffant, a half an inch of make-up, and a turtle-neck sweater. She was going to try this sucker out. She put the protective beauty mask over her head and zipped the zipper. Off comes the madras muu muu.

Ellis takes one look at all that pasty white skin and gags.

On goes the skin-tight, turquoise, turtle-neck sweater. Ruth laughed a little laugh, triumphant. Her bouffant and make-up are unscathed. But then her beauty mask started to fog up. She felt a little faint. Better undo the zipper, she thought. But the end of the zipper was stuck down deep in the neck of the turtle-neck. She couldn't get to it. She clawed at the sweater. It was tighter than she thought. She staggered around the room like a wino on the eighth day of an eight-day drunk.

"That's a great shade of purple rouge, Ruth," said Ellis. He finally realized she was in trouble when she fell to the floor and started flopping around like fresh caught mackerel. He got down on the floor with her and pulled at the mask. It wouldn't budge. He braced his feet on her shoulders and pulled at the mask from above her head as hard as he could. Her neck grew three inches. Her life passed before her eyes.

Ellis gave a final, superhuman pull. The beauty mask popped off, sending him skidding across the rug.

Ruth sat up, a hand to her breast, panting like an overheated basset hound, her bouffant pulled up straight above her head about two feet, revealing the grey roots underneath, a smear of her blood-red lipstick forming a vertical stripe from her lips to her forehead.

Ellis took one look and started laughing hysterically, pointing first to the beauty mask, then to the disarray on Ruth's head. He slapped his knee, tears ran down his cheeks.

He probably would have laughed himself sick if Ruth hadn't gotten up and floored him with a crisp left hook.